We, The Americans
Young Marrieds

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We, The Young Marrieds

Like people the world over
since the beginning of recorded history,
we Americans marry when we are young
and love is new.

Today, because there are more of us young Americans
than ever before, it follows that
there should be more young marrieds
than ever before,
and so it is.

But the proportion of young people who are married
has dropped.
The proportion separated and divorced
has risen.
And we young marrieds are having fewer children.
Census statistics underscoring these changes are
on the following pages.

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Percentage of Young Marrieds Declining

During the 1960's the number of young people in their twenties (the peak marriage years) grew from 21.7 million to 29.5 million and the number married increased from 15.1 million to 19.1 million. Proportionately, however, fewer were married in 1970 than in 1960—65 percent as compared with 70 percent.

The increase in the proportions of young single and divorced persons between 1960 and 1970 is shown below.

PERCENTAGE DECLINE IN YOUNG MARRIEDS: 1960-1970

	Ages 20-29		Ages 20-21		Ages 22-24		Ages 25-29	
	1960	1970	1960	1970	1960	1970	1960	1970
Total Number (millions)	21.7	29.5	4.4	6.7	6.4	9.5	10.9	13.4
Proportion Single	28.0%	32.0%	54.7%	61.0%	30.9%	34.6%	15.6%	15.8%
Proportion Married	69.8%	64.6%	44.1%	37.4%	67.2%	62.3%	81.8%	79.8%
Proportion Divorced	1.8%	2.8%	1.1%	1.2%	1.7%	2.5%	2.2%	3.7%

Brides And Bridegrooms Older

The average age for both brides and bridegrooms when they first stepped to the altar was about 6 months greater in 1970 than 10 years earlier. During the 1960-70 decade, the median age at first marriage rose from 22.8 to 23.5 years for men and from 20.3 to 20.8 years for women. ("Median age" means that half were younger and half older than these ages.)

When blacks marry they are likely to do so at younger ages than either whites or persons of Spanish heritage. Women of Spanish heritage are likely to be older when they first marry than either white or black women, while men of Spanish heritage are about the same age as black men and only a little younger than white men when they first marry.

MEDIAN AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE:
1970

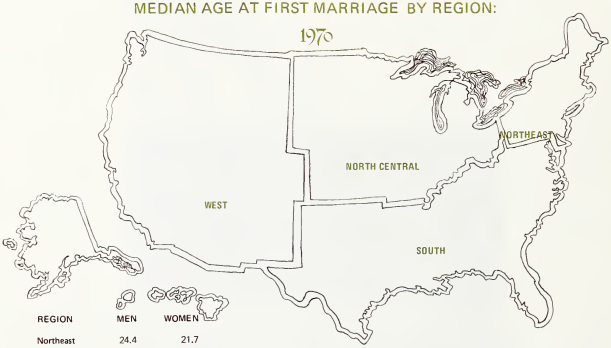
	MEN	WOMEN
White	23.5	20.8
Black	23.1	20.2
Spanish heritage	23.2	21.4

Southerners Marry Younger

The region of the country where young people live may have a bearing on their ages when they first marry. Southerners marry younger and northeasterners marry older, on the average, than do couples in the other regions. The following table shows these differences among the four regions of the United States.

MEDIAN AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE BY REGION:

1970



REGION	MEN	WOMEN
Northeast	24.4	21.7
North Central	23.4	20.7
South	22.8	20.0
West	23.4	20.6

More Marry Again

The proportion of young people over age 20 who had married more than once was on the increase during the 1960's. Among young marrieds in their late 20's, the proportion who had been married before rose from 7 to 9 percent.

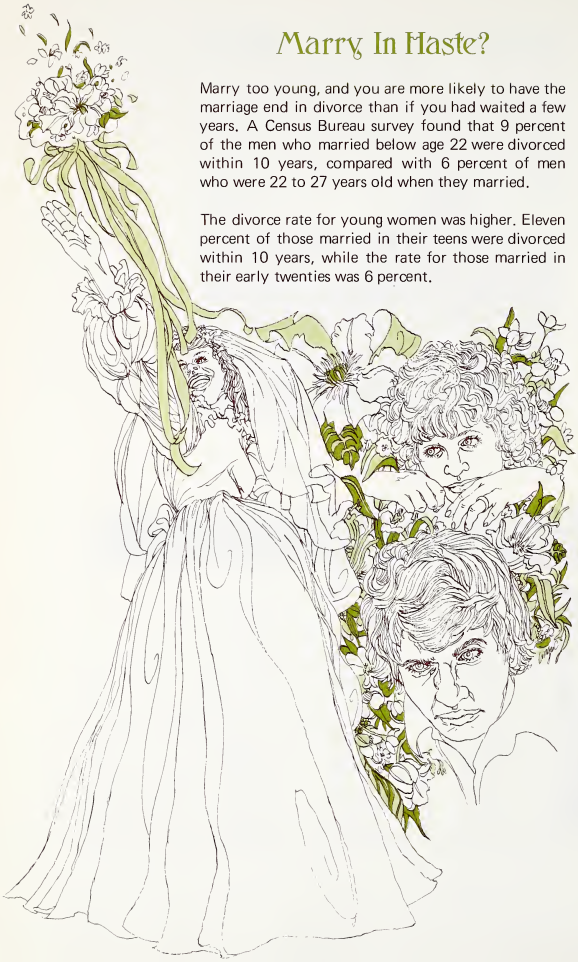
THE YOUNG REMARRIEDS

1970	All married persons	Married more than once	Percent of all married persons
18-29 years	20,196,000	1,339,000	6.6
18-19 years	1,129,000	21,200	1.9
20-21 years	2,494,000	75,800	3.0
22-24 years	5,890,000	288,800	4.9
25-29 years	10,683,000	953,400	8.9
1960			
18-29 years	16,085,000	932,600	5.8
18-19 years	960,200	21,400	2.2
20-21 years	1,938,000	61,400	3.2
22-24 years	4,294,000	187,900	4.4
25-29 years	8,893,000	661,800	7.4

Marry In Haste?

Marry too young, and you are more likely to have the marriage end in divorce than if you had waited a few years. A Census Bureau survey found that 9 percent of the men who married below age 22 were divorced within 10 years, compared with 6 percent of men who were 22 to 27 years old when they married.

The divorce rate for young women was higher. Eleven percent of those married in their teens were divorced within 10 years, while the rate for those married in their early twenties was 6 percent.



The Young Husband's Lot

Married men are more likely to be in the labor force than those never married, divorced, or widowed. Among men 18 to 34 years of age, 95 percent of the married men were in the labor force in 1970, compared with 87 percent of the divorced men, 76 percent of those who were widowed, and 69 percent of the single men, who tend to be concentrated at the younger end of the age group.

Working at a job or career is typical of young married men, regardless of race or ethnic origin. Among 18-to-34-year-old men, 96 percent of white married men, 91 percent of black, and 94 percent of Spanish heritage were in the labor force in 1970.

Education And Marriage Stability

The amount of education young people have obtained appears to have a bearing on the stability of their marriages. Those with the most education, 5 years or more of college, have the highest percentage married only once and the lowest percentage separated or divorced.

EDUCATION AS A FACTOR IN MARRIAGE STABILITY: 1970

(Persons 20 to 34 Years Old)

Years of school completed	Total ever married	Married once, spouse present	Separated	Ever divorced
Elementary school 8 years	1,342,000	73.7%	5.4%	16.0%
High school 4 years	13,454,000	82.3%	2.7%	11.1%
College 5 years or more	1,451,000	89.7%	1.2%	6.0%

Median Family Income of Young Marrieds By Labor Force Status of Wives: 1969

	All families	
	Total	Income
Husband under 25	3,087,000	$7,112
Wife in labor force	47%	8,094
Wife not in labor force	53%	6,354
Husband 25-34	9,227,000	10,073
Wife in labor force	39%	11,384
Wife not in labor force	61%	9,399

Our Income Grows With Our Age

In 1970, there were 12.3 million families in which the husbands were under age 35. The average income (reported for 1969) was $7,112 for families in which the husbands were under 25 years old and $10,073 for families in which the husbands were 25 to 34 years old—nearly equal to the $10,211 average income for all husband-wife families.

Families of the older husbands had higher incomes despite the fact that a smaller proportion (39 percent) of the wives were working, as compared with 47 percent of wives of the younger husbands.

White		Black		Spanish heritage	
Total	Income	Total	Income	Total	Income
2,811,026	$7,224	251,619	$5,950	177,438	$6,013
47%	8,193	51%	7,129	37%	7,382
53%	6,481	49%	4,968	63%	5,317
8,366,889	10,288	750,754	8,074	479,108	8,283
37%	11,596	56%	9,545	35%	10,108
63%	9,596	44%	6,595	65%	7,402

Young Marrieds Have Fewer Children

The American family is getting smaller. Young couples are having fewer children. Even the no-child family, proposed by some people concerned with the possibility of overpopulation, is gaining favor.

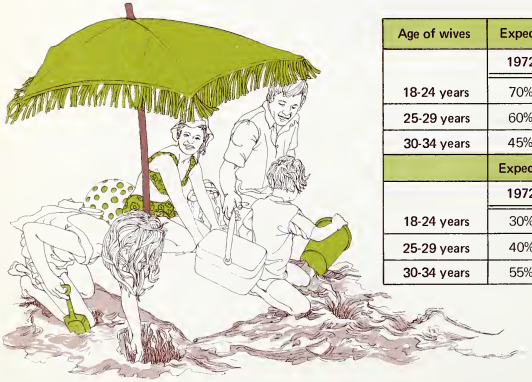
Among young women in 1970 who were or had been married, 29 percent had never had any children, compared with 20 percent in 1960.

During the 1960's, the proportion of young mothers who had only one child or only two children did not change significantly, but the proportion with three children fell from 15 to 11 percent.

This may mean that young couples are delaying having children, but surveys have shown that their expectations regarding family size have changed. Between 1960 and 1972, the average number of children that wives 18 to 24 years old expected to have dropped from 3.1 to 2.3.

Here is a table that shows results of surveys taken in 1967 and 1972, which indicate that families will be smaller in the future.

NUMBER OF CHILDREN EXPECTED BY YOUNG WIVES: 1967-1972



Age of wives	Expecting 2 or less	
	1972	1967
18-24 years	70%	45%
25-29 years	60%	37%
30-34 years	45%	35%
	Expecting 3 or more	
	1972	1967
18-24 years	30%	54%
25-29 years	40%	63%
30-34 years	55%	65%

The 1970's
Era of The Young Marrieds

The 1960's were a period of rapid social change. Unusually large numbers of young people left their parental homes to attend college, to serve in the armed forces, or simply to establish their own households. Minority groups organized for the purpose of helping their people gain a more abundant living. The hippie movement, communes, and women's liberation challenged attitudes toward marriage and the family.

These changes and the tensions they created were occurring during the same years that the largest number of young people in American history were coming of age to settle down to family life.

By their very numbers, these young adults, with their new life styles and new values for a meaningful life, will have a profound effect on the American family.

More of them are delaying marriage, and more of those who marry are obtaining divorces. Young couples are waiting longer after marriage to start their families, and most want fewer children at the completion of their families. Many want no children.

As a result, America is faced with an era of slower growth that will eventually affect almost every facet of national life. . . .perhaps for the better.

What do you think?

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